



# Connecting the World through Books

Donna Sullivan-MacDonald  
Guest Contributor



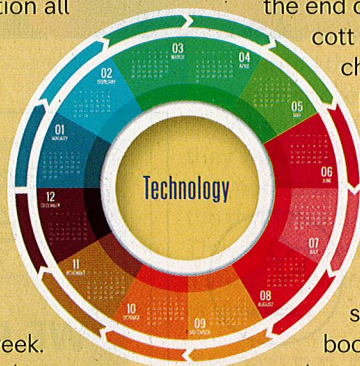
Thanks to the internet, and our ability to connect with people halfway around the globe with just a few clicks, the world can feel smaller than ever. And when it's applied in the classroom, the potential of a connected world can help to amplify classroom learning. That's where the ISTE Standard 7 for students, known as Global Collaborator, comes in. As the library media specialist at Orchard School in Vermont, here's how I apply the standard and keep students engaged in global collaboration all school year long.

**SEPTEMBER** Celebrated every September 15, International Dot Day is a great way to mark the beginning of the school year. Peter Reynolds's book, *The Dot*, about a student who takes risks and tries new things, can help make the occasion even more special. At Orchard School, we acknowledge International Dot Day for a full school week. We enjoy connecting with classes around the U.S., and share projects and stories for the entire celebration. This year, classes interacted with students in Argentina, Canada, and London! Sometimes, we shared collaborative dots. Each class took a turn making a contribution to the artwork. We learned a bit more about each other along the way.

**OCTOBER** Connect the world through one book. That was the goal when Global Read Aloud began in 2010. This year, the project included four books and an author study, appropriate for students in preK through high school. For six weeks, beginning in early October, more than 2 million participants used Skype, Edmodo, blogs, Twitter, Padlet, and just about any other means, to make as many global connections as possible. Kudos to tireless Wisconsin educator Pernille Ripp, who organized the project!

**NOVEMBER** During the month-long international literacy initiative known as Picture Book Month, students of all levels evaluate and share their favorite picture books. They connect with authors and illustrators through Skype, Google Hangout, Twitter—even snail mail! The observance also gives educators around the world an opportunity to share their favorite books with students.

**JANUARY and FEBRUARY** A few weeks before the American Library Association announces the winner of the year's prestigious Caldecott Medal, which goes to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children, fourth and fifth graders at Orchard School participate in a mock Caldecott unit. Working in collaborative teams, students evaluate about 24 books that have been preselected through favorable reviews. First, they review Caldecott Medal criteria and post their thoughts in blogs, Padlets, Flip-grid videos, and Twitter. Students are always excited to read Twitter replies from authors and illustrators! At the end of the unit, classes select their Caldecott Medal winner, and then share their choices via Skype visits, tweets, and blog posts.



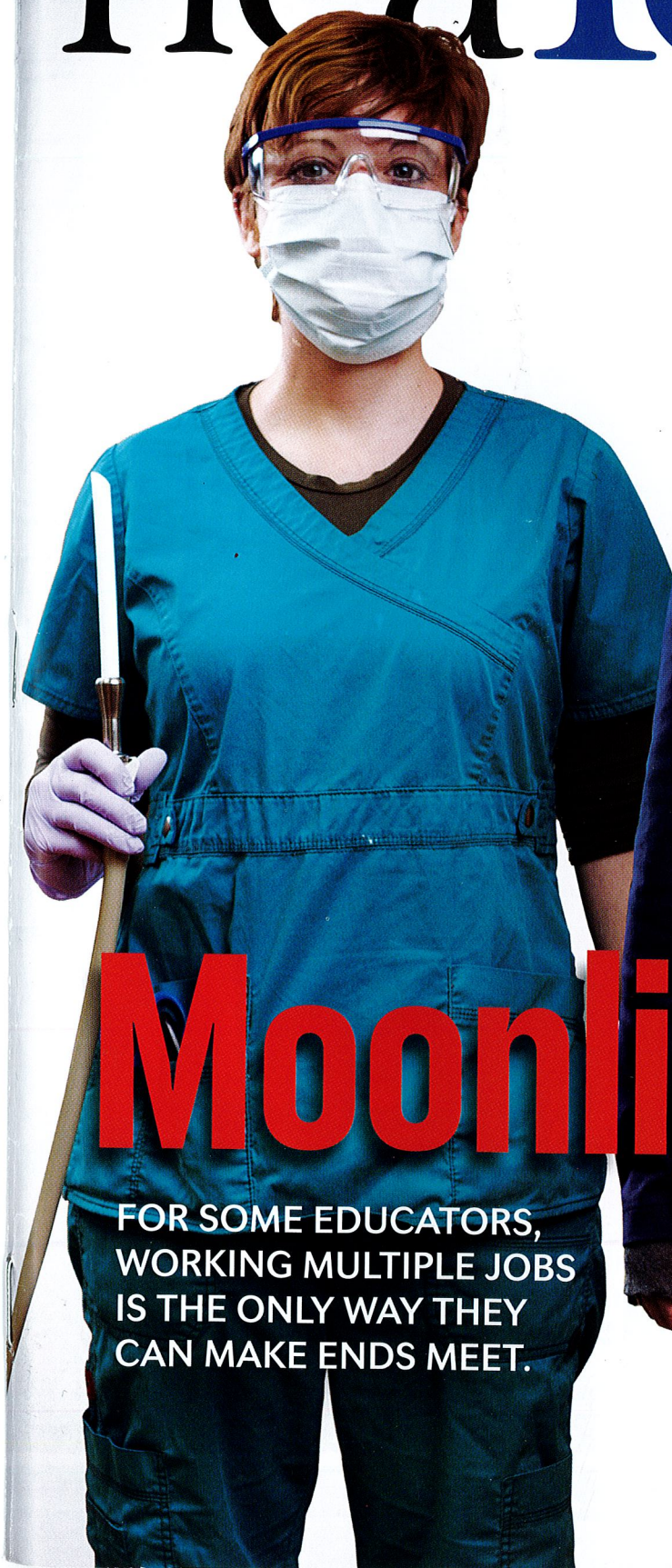
**FEBRUARY and MARCH** World Read Aloud Day, held in February, involves millions of people in more than 100 countries. At Orchard School, all of our 22 classes visit with authors and schools around the world. Students share books, which inspires them to learn about other cultures. Of course, we also participate in NEA's Read Across America, the nationwide reading celebration on or near March 2, the birth date of Dr. Seuss. The event calls on every child in every community to celebrate the magic of reading!

**APRIL** The month that is known for rain showers also brings Poem in Your Pocket Day—a time when poetry lovers are encouraged to carry a favorite work throughout their day and share it with someone else. At Orchard School, the observation is virtual, with students sharing poems—some that they've written themselves.

**YEAR-ROUND** Skype in the Classroom is a great resource for speakers, virtual field trips, collaborative lessons, Mystery Skype, and more.

*Donna Sullivan-MacDonald, library media and instructional technology specialist at Orchard School in Burlington, Vermont, is the Vermont School Library Association president.*

# neaToday



# Moonlighting

FOR SOME EDUCATORS,  
WORKING MULTIPLE JOBS  
IS THE ONLY WAY THEY  
CAN MAKE ENDS MEET.

SEE PAGE 40